

Libby Community Advisory Group

Meeting Summary

August 11, 2005

Introductions

Gerald Mueller and members of the Libby Community Advisory Group (CAG) introduced themselves. A list of the members in attendance is attached below as Appendix 1.

Agenda

The CAG agreed to the following agenda for this meeting:

- Agency Reports
 - EPA
 - State
 - TAG
 - CARD Clinic
- Community Involvement Conference Report
- UM Asbestos Conference Report
- Lupus Survey
- Public Comment

EPA Report

Wendy Thomi reported on behalf of EPA on the following topics.

Media Communication Ban

Judge Molloy, the federal district judge who is presiding over the W.R. Grace criminal trial, has recently stated that he will not allow the case to be tried in the press. In response, EPA headquarters has directed the Libby EPA team to refer all media questions to the Administrator's Press Secretary Eryn Witcher. Her telephone number is 202-564-7351.

CAG Member Comment - The Region 8 Libby team announced after the indictments were first issued that the criminal trial is not a subject that it would address. Team members would continue to focus on the cleanup.

CAG Member Question - What is the name of the person who issued this edict?

Answer - I don't know who made the decision. It was communicated to Region 8 by Eryn Witcher.

CAG Member Question - Did Judge Malloy issue a "gag" order?

Answer - I don't know the details about the "gag" order.

CAG Member Question - Who is Ms. Witcher's direct boss?

Answer - I am not sure.

CAG Member Question - How long will this edict be in effect?

Answer - For the time being.

CAG Member Comment - I am concerned about this attempt to stifle communication with the

press. I will echo any question that the press wishes to ask at this meeting.

CAG Member Question - Is the EPA Administrator Steve Johnson a political appointee?

Answer - Yes.

CAG Member Question - Is Ms. Witcher?

Answer - I don't know.

CAG Member Question - Will press releases continue to be issued locally?

Answer - Yes. EPA will continue to issue press releases locally. Both Region 8 and the local team are precluded from giving interviews or from answering questions from the media, including the local newspapers and radio station. All questions must be directed to Ms. Witcher.

CAG Member Question - This is not right in America. The press is the conduit for the public.

CAG Member Comment - We know enough to get the word out about issues such as the risk posed by vermiculite insulation in homes to residents and workers who might come in contact with the Libby asbestos fiber. The science indicates that much lower exposures lead to plural diseases than is contemplated in occupational standards. If the EPA website is the only source of information about this, people will not get the information they need to take proper precautions and avoid putting themselves at risk. The public health and other agencies need to get the word out to help prevent exposures.

Response - We are aware of criticism of the EPA web site. Some say it looks like a chamber of commerce site, or that it does not look like a traditional Superfund web site. We have worked extensively with economic development groups to lessen the stigma resulting from Libby's Superfund site designation. The presentation of the web site in a series of layers is somewhat complicated, but it is easy to navigate. The Libby site is different, but Libby needs more than a traditional web site.

CAG Member Comment - EPA has worked here for five years, and it seems strange to have a "gag" rule now.

CAG Member Comment - This is not the first time the Bush Administration has gagged EPA; it is the third.

Response - It is not EPA's intention to withhold information. The "gag" rule stemmed from a concern that the criminal trial not be jeopardized by communication with the press. I do not know the details of how the rule was initiated or where it came from.

CAG Member Question - What kind of questions can you answer here tonight?

Answer - We can address the normal CAG topics. We cannot answer any questions regarding the criminal trial, and we cannot respond to questions from the media.

CAG Member Question - We will find a way to get the information out. This community is taking care of things here. People outside of this community, however, are not being warned about how non-occupational exposures can lead to health complications. How do we get this word out?

Answer - There are other ways to spread the information. The recent UM asbestos conference is an example. We need to be patient to see how this plays out. In the mean time, EPA

headquarters has volunteered to respond to media questions.

Record of Decision Document - The record of decision (ROD) that will document how EPA is conducting the remedial cleanup for residential and commercial buildings is scheduled for completion in the spring of 2006. A proposed plan will be issued prior to the ROD. The proposed plan will be shorter than the ROD and will explain actions EPA will take to clean the residential and commercial buildings. The public will have 30 days to comment on the proposed plan.

Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study - This study, known by its acronym RI/FS, will proceed the two documents just described. The RI/FS will provide information about various aspects of both the immediate and long-term cleanup. It will address the findings resulting from sampling of various potential exposure pathways such as lawn mowing, carpets, and children crawling on floors and carpets. It will include the results of confirmation sampling done 3, 6, and 9 months after cleanups. It will also cover the demolitions, ambient sampling results, the phase 2 sampling results, and the contaminant screening study of Libby homes.

Superfund Outreach - EPA is continuing its efforts to help the public understand the Superfund process. We have sent out a survey to gauge current understanding of Superfund and people's response to the cleanup work that has happened. We will continue to publish newspaper columns to discuss the Superfund process and technical cleanup issues in more detail than the regular Q&A items. Finally, we will continue to conduct special meetings focused on particular segments of the community. Meetings have already been held with realtors, business groups, and contractors and workers involved with home repairs.

September 14 and 15 Workshop - EPA will conduct a workshop in Libby on September 14 and 15 on the Superfund process and several technical cleanup issues. This workshop will be similar to that hosted by EPA on October 5 and 6, 2004 in Denver for the Libby Area Technical Assistance Group (TAG) and state and local agency personnel. Its purpose will be to provide the public with a basic understanding of the Superfund process and issues related to the cleanup such as asbestos toxicity, risk assessment, sampling, and cleanup techniques. Two people from the Region 5 office in Chicago will discuss the Superfund process on September 14. On September 15, we will address the technical issues.

September CAG Meeting Date - To enable the CAG meeting to coincide with the September 14 - 15 workshop, Ms. Thomi asked that the next meeting be moved to the third Thursday in September rather than the second Thursday. The CAG agreed, so the next meeting will be on Thursday, September 15, 2005.

October 11 Pubic Meeting - On Tuesday, October 11, EPA will conduct a public meeting in Libby to discuss the big picture issues including the sampling results and the status of the cleanup. We hope this meeting will be attended by hundreds of people as were the early public meetings held when we first arrived in Libby.

Soil Sampling Letters - Mailing of letters containing the results of the soil sampling is underway and should be completed by the end of August. People who had soil sampled and have not received a letter by the end of August should contact the EPA Information Center. Some mailed letters have been returned because EPA used physical addresses rather than post office box

numbers. Please call the Information Center if you have a post office box.

Cleanup Numbers - To date, EPA has completed cleanups on a total of 475 residential and commercial buildings in Libby, including 124 this year. We are ahead of schedule and will meet or exceed this year's cleanup target.

New Assignment - Wendy Thomi has accepted a one year temporary assignment in Region 2. The next CAG meeting in September will be her last. Her replacement will be Ted Linnert who has been a Community Involvement Coordinator at other Superfund sites. Mr. Linnert will attend the September meeting. Mr. Linnert's telephone number is 303-312-6119.

CAG Member Question – Will RI/FS sampling results be discussed at the October 11 public meeting?

Answer - This is a good idea that I will pass on. I am not sure, however, that all of the samples will be analyzed by then.

Audience Member Comment - Could you report on the demolition of the Loomis house?

Answer -The demolition went well. More water was used to suppress dust. Only one asbestos structure was detected during the air sampling conducted in conjunction with the demolition.

Audience Member Question - What is your new assignment?

Answer - I will be the Community Involvement Coordinator for the World Trade Center (WTC) team in New York City. EPA is considering additional sampling in Lower Manhattan and Brooklyn in search for contamination and a specific contaminant signature resulting from the collapse of the WTC.

CAG Member Comment - I recently met with people in New York City who are dealing with the aftermath of the WTC collapse. Their situation reminded me of Libby in 2000. People are angry and are wondering what to do. They are eager to learn from our experience here.

CAG Member Comment - Your work here in Libby is excellent experience for New York. You taught us a lot, and you have learned from us as well. Thank you for your efforts here. You were willing to stick your neck out on our behalf.

Response - Thank you. I will always treasure my time here in Libby.

CAG Member Question - Is the ROD being worked on here or in Denver?

Response - Jim Christiansen is working on both the RI/FS and the ROD in Denver.

CAG Member Question - Will there be a separate ROD for each operable unit?

Answer - Yes. A ROD will also be issued for facilities already cleaned such as the export plant.

CAG Member Question - Will a ROD also be issued for the mine?

Answer - Yes. Bonnie Lavelle has been assigned to work only on the mine.

Audience Member Comment - I want to emphasize a point made earlier. Vermiculite from Libby has had many uses across this country. America needs to understand the risk that asbestos poses. Levels of exposure to Libby amphibole lower than that from commercial forms of asbestos cause disease. EPA issued a brochure addressing attic insulation that did not mention the increased toxicity of Libby asbestos over asbestos fiber types.

State Report

Catherine LeCours reported on behalf of the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) that she did not have new information. She explained that DEQ is in a support role for EPA's cleanup efforts.

Audience Member Question - Your success here in Libby addressing the asbestos contamination appears to be based on facing the facts and distributing them within the community. How do you see the other states doing in this regard?

Answer - I am too new at this subject to know much about what is happening in other states.

Audience Member Question - How could others benefit from the Libby experience?

Answer - People should take responsibility for where they live. They should, as you have said, face the facts and share them within their communities. There is a lot that can be learned from the experience here in Libby.

TAG Report

Gayla Benefield reported on behalf of the TAG. The TAG has issued a job announcement for a technical advisor. Several responses have been received, all from people outside of Libby. Helen Clarke chairs the selection committee which is reviewing the applications. The TAG hopes to have a technical advisor selected before the September 14 - 15 workshop. The TAG Board of Directors currently has eleven members, including two from Troy. The Board can be expanded if others are interested in serving on it.

CAG Member Question - Will the technical advisor be accessible to people in Libby?

Answer - Based on applications to date, the advisor is not likely to be a resident of Libby. The TAG has not considered such access to be a requirement. The advisor's duties will be to read and translate technical documents to lay language.

CAG Member Question - Will the TAG be able to pose questions to the technical advisor?

Answer - Yes.

CARD Clinic Report

Dr. Brad Black reported on behalf of the CARD Clinic on the following topics.

Open House - Dr. Black invited everyone to tomorrow's open house at the CARD Clinic which will be held from 4:30 to 8:00 p.m. Among other topics, we will have posters addressing the uniqueness of the Libby asbestos fiber.

Zonolite Study - This study has been completed. It allowed "B-Readers" to review chest x-rays taken of Zonolite workers. The readers were able to study how asbestos-related disease appears on x-ray films and how progression of the disease shows on the films. X-rays were available of workers over time. The B-Readers looked first at the latest x-rays and then reviewed a time sequence of earlier films. This study has allowed the academic community to understand what went on here.

Mesothelioma Blood Markers - Dr. Harvey Pass, who is the Chief Thoracic Surgeon at New York University Hospital, and Dr. Black are co-investigators of a study of mesothelioma blood

markers in different populations of people exposed to asbestos fiber. Data from Australia indicates that a blood marker begins to elevate a year in advance of the evidence of the disease.

CARD Finances - The CARD depends on receiving fees for its services. Funding is becoming a bigger issue as the W.R. Grace Health Plan (Plan) diminishes. Apparently, 135 people are about to be dropped by HNA from the Plan. This loss of patient reimbursement will impact the entire medical system in Libby. This does not mean, however, that the CARD or St. John's Lutheran Hospital will stop treating patients.

CAG Member Comment - W.R. Grace continues to generate revenue of about \$1 billion per year. This company should be required to pay all health care costs of Libby people resulting from the asbestos exposure.

CAG Member Comment - Although it is apparently dropping people from coverage under the Plan, HNA is recently announced a new benefit. The Plan will now pay for autopsies.

CAG Member Comment - All most of us have to help us pay for our medical expenses is the Plan. We need to continue to pursue the declaration of a public health emergency under the federal Superfund statute to receive funding for health care costs.

CAG Member Comment - Rural health care in general is being marginalized. Here in Libby, our health care system will face a huge impact if we are forced to take on the load of asbestos related disease treatment without funding help.

Community Involvement Conference

Gayla Benefield reported that she recently attended an EPA sponsored conference entitled "Building Bridges from Strong Partnerships" in Buffalo, New York. People she met there were aware of, impressed with, and care about Libby.

Audience Member Question - What is happening regarding the federal asbestos legislation?

Answer - Nothing is happening this month. An effort may be made to push the legislation through in September.

Audience Member Question - Is Libby in or out of the current draft?

Answer - We were in for a day, but the eligibility criteria were again changed to exclude coverage of people in Libby.

UM Asbestos Conference Report

Dr. Brad Black presented highlights of the conference entitled "New Directions and Needs in Asbestos Research" which the University of Montana Center for Environmental Health Sciences held on July 28-29, 2005. Libby was well represented. The number of researchers in asbestos disease has been diminishing, and the conference was held in part in an effort to reinvigorate interest in this area. The conference began with a presentation by Helen Clarke about the importance of community collaboration in the provision of health care in Libby, a rural community. It continued with a report by Rita Messing of the Minnesota Department of Health about community exposure from a vermiculite expansion plant in Minneapolis. She found many exposure pathways common to our experience in Libby. She needs additional support to document the health impacts from specific pathways. Pat Cohan discussed research in Libby and

the need for respecting privacy when sharing health care data. Using the Libby experience, Tanis Hernandez talked about the psychosocial impacts of a man-made disaster as opposed to a natural disaster. Dr. Stephen Levin discussed the health effects suffered by the responders to the collapse of World Trade Center. Many are suffering respiratory problems. Amy Rohs reported on a follow-up study of 300 Scott workers who were exposed twenty-five years ago to Libby vermiculite in the manufacture of lawn and garden products. This study is significant because of its ability to estimate worker exposures. It found that 25% of the workers had plural disease and that even those with low exposure levels showed lung changes. Dr. Harvey Pass presented information about mesothelioma blood markers.

CAG Member Question - Why is interest in research in asbestos disease diminishing?

Answer - The perception has been that this disease is disappearing as asbestos exposure has declined. In medical school in the 1970s, we were told that we not would see asbestos disease. Along with this perception, research funding in this area has been reduced. Interest in research generally responds to funding.

CAG Member Comment - Over the next three years and two months of the Bush Administration, federal government interest in asbestos research will continue to decline.

CAG Member Comment - Asbestos-related research is bucking up against the interests of both big business and big government. Research defining how toxic this asbestos fiber is and what diseases it causes may threaten the interests of the asbestos industry.

CAG Member Comment - The environmental and occupational exposure we suffered in Libby was preventable. We need compensation for this disease in the form of research funding. The CAG should write a letter to Senator Baucus and the other members of the Montana Congressional delegation seeking funding for asbestos-related disease research.

CAG Member Comment - When he visited Libby some time back, an Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services promised help with identifying and providing for our health care needs. The letter should reference this promise.

CAG Action - The CAG agreed with the idea of sending a letter to the Montana delegation seeking support for research funding and requested Clinton Maynard and Dr. Black to draft such a letter for consideration at the next CAG meeting.

Audience Member Comment - Thank you to Dr. Black and Dr. Whitehouse for their personal involvement on our behalf.

Lupus Survey

Helen Clarke announced that Dr. Jean Pfau of the UM Center for Environmental Health Sciences is seeking to survey people in Libby who have been diagnosed with Lupus disease to begin to develop a data base to compare the incidence of this disease with asbestos exposure. Dr. Tony Ward, also with the Center, is seeking to survey Libby people with wood burning stoves in their house.

Public Comment

There was no additional public comment.

Next Meeting

The next CAG meeting was scheduled for 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. on Thursday, September 15, 2005 in the Ponderosa Room of Libby City Hall.

Appendix 1

CAG Member & Guest Attendance List August 11, 2005

Members	Group/Organization Represented
Bill Patten	St. John's Lutheran Hospital CEO
Clinton Maynard	Area Asbestos Research Group
David Latham	<i>The Montanian Newspaper</i>
Wendy Thomi	EPA Community Involvement
Catherine LeCours	DEQ
Dr. Brad Black	Lincoln County Health Officer/CARD
Gayla Benefield	LCAVRO/TAG/ARD Net
Gary D. Swenson	Libby Volunteer Fire Department
Eileen Carney	Montana Board of Respiratory Care Practitioners
Norita Skramstad	Asbestos Victim